

# RARE FRANKNESS IN PUBLIC LIFE

**Absolute Candor a Feature of Victor Murdock's Political Policy—Speeches Characterized by Simple Eloquence**

All the world likes a man who will frankly tell where he stands without unnecessarily wounding the feelings of those who oppose him—without, in other words, acting the demagogue. Such a man is Victor Murdock. His speech accepting the nomination of the Republican party at the Great Bend convention is said to be, by competent critics of political oratory, one of the cleanest speeches ever made in Kansas, in his, that while Mr. Murdock stated positively where he stood on all questions of prime importance in American politics, he did not, in a single instance, impugn the motives or question the honesty of men who differ from the Republican party on the great questions with which American statecraft has to deal. It is said that Mr. Murdock is not an orator, but there is a simple, manly and inoffensive frankness in the following speech which appeals stronger to the average fair-minded Kansan than the rhetoric of the skilled spellbinder. This is what Mr. Murdock said:

"My friends: It is with deep emotion, and with sincerity deeper still, that I thank you for the nomination you have so generously tendered me. It is customary for a successful candidate to give special thanks to his warmest friends in a contest, and this I now do; but on this occasion I also feel that every man in the convention, and every man he represents, is my friend. I do not except the friendly Democrats, especially the Democratic editors who have shown me so many courtesies during my campaign. In a word, I thank everybody and will try to merit their friendship if I am lucky enough to occupy the place in congress recently vacated by our distinguished junior senator, Mr. Long.

"In my remarks, gentlemen, I must be very brief, for there is at home one who is waiting a message from Great Bend, one who must, as soon as possible, share with me in the joy of this occasion.

"My friends, I am going to congress, if the people ratify the action of this convention—and I live—as a Republican. I am going there as a Kansas Republican, as a Seventh district Republican. I am going there with a special and a common purpose. I am not vain enough, I hope, to think that I can immediately make the influence which this great people of the Seventh district will delegate to me, felt; but I hope in time by keeping a steady eye on opportunity, to be able to ask, with some degree of effectiveness, something that the shortgrass country—whether it shall be the Eighth district, or the proud Big Seventh still—will remember me by. In a sentence, my friends, my special purpose in congress shall be to obtain some recognition of the dream of the great caravan of pioneers who have crossed and recrossed the prairies in hopes of making our western counties better agricultural as well as better beef producing territory. I am going to interest Uncle Sam, if I can, in water; and I don't care for the present whether it is rain water, artesian water or common, every day Arkansas river water. I want it applied to the prairies of higher Kansas according to the most practicable principles of advanced scientific irrigation, and with the start made under fair auspices you and I, and every one of us I hope, may live to see Kansas the imperial commonwealth which our pioneer fathers dreamed of.

"I am going to congress with the general Republican purpose of advancing the interest, the influence and the glory of our greater republic. I am going to stand for the most stable currency our widening commerce needs in the control of this and other natural commercial territory. I am going to stand for money, the best that any nation can coin.

"I am going to stand for a navy that will maintain our honor and prestige in every port and harbor in the world, and that will keep alive in our hearts that pride of country which was born anew within us all on that memorable day when Dewey split the proud blood of Castilian down in Manila bay.

"I stand for an army fit to cope with all probable exigencies, and a national guard reinforcement that will enable us at any hour to defend the country's just interests from unjust aggressions by any foe, or any race, on earth. To my mind, we will have to defend either the Monroe Doctrine or its spirit, some day, for with progressive Republican ideas of national enrichment through international commerce, we will have to deal and trade with a people whose independence and political entity depend largely upon our insistence on the Monroe Doctrine as a national and an international policy.

"I shall stand for that strong basic element of all our national prosperity, a Republican protective tariff. I believe the time is nearly ripe, perhaps, when some system can be formulated, through the wisdom of Republican statesmen, by which our tariff schedules can be modified or raised to suit the immediate conditions and requirements of commerce, without the necessity and delay of congressional action. It may be that such a system would be needed to curb the power and immense influence of combined capital, whose actions, in an arrogant mood, may require that intervention from which a Republican administration has never shrunk when the natural rights of the people were threatened by the assumed power of wealth.

"I shall stand for that embodied spirit of heroic manhood, Theodore Roosevelt. I shall stand with him as long as he is president of the United States and the correct interpreter of the composite public opinion of the nation.

"I shall stand by, and with, and for, the men whose deeds and sacrifices merged in the immortal achievement at Appomattox.

"I shall stand for everything that is consistent with justice, because to my mind justice was the cardinal idea which inspired the fathers of Republicanism to organize the grand old party which gave them in their initial victory the most just and that modern times have produced—Abraham Lincoln.

"Gentlemen, I thank you again for the honor you have given me, and I hope that that Omnipotent Guide above will give me the vision, the strength and the cour-

age to see my duty, to stand for my convictions and to defend the great trust you have reposed in me this day."

Victor Murdock in sentiment is a thorough western Kansan man. One of his life long hobbies is an idea that there is a great future for what was earlier known, and in a large measure is yet known, as semi-arid Kansas. He believes that it never was the divine intention to give western Kansas an unparalleled soil and then deny it the moisture required to stimulate its productive power. It is among his plans, more so than ever since he attended the irrigation convention at Garden City on April 15, to, as early as possible get the ear of the hydrographic department at Washington for the purpose of preparing himself for the initiation of a campaign against the government with a view to inducing it to enter more seriously into some project of irrigation for the prairies of western Kansas. He has some views of his own with reference to the subject, but he does not yet know whether they are entirely feasible. He intends to find out, for he does not believe that it would advance a cause he is very much interested in to advocate a non-feasible proposition. His mind on the subject may be gathered from an unprepared short talk he made at the Garden City congress April 15 as follows:

"Gentlemen: The primary object and purpose of my visit with you here today was not to talk, but to listen; not to instruct, but to learn. Since I have been in the Garden City—this possible garden spot of the imperial west—I have heard a great deal of interest and learned a great deal of value. To a Wichita man water is always a fascinating theme, and hence I say to you that since I have been out with this congress, and heard so many able remarks on this subject of irrigation, I have been interested beyond expression.

"All my days have been spent in what was once classed as the semi-arid belt, and from my earliest youth I have had it drilled into me that the people of the west must join hands and efforts to solve the problem of artificial moisture. You, gentlemen of experience, are here to solve that problem. Define your plans, establish their feasibility and I say to you that if I shall have any voice in the affairs of this government that voice will be in harmony with the wishes of this distinguished gathering.

"I can say for myself that I have some ideas on the subject of irrigation, but they are crude and immature at present, and without further study I am unable to demonstrate their feasibility. I do know from common instinct, however, that there is something wrong in the order of nature—and with ourselves—when billions upon billions of cubic feet of water are allowed to annually roll down to the sea level, while it is needed for the prosperity and consequent happiness of a great and ambitious people on the broad plains of western Kansas.

It is entirely inconsistent with the divine plan to furnish a people with a rich soil of immense depth and a flood of sunshine to stimulate and invigorate it, and at the same time deny them that third element so essential to productive potentiality. I say it is inconsistent with the divine plan and I cannot account for it on any other theory than that it was the purpose of the Almighty to reserve for his favorite people an opportunity to prove their genius and capacity to remedy an oversight of nature and complete the unfinished purpose of her law—the conservation and distribution of abundant moisture to inspire a smiling land to a greater productive effort.

"Gentlemen, I have great hopes for the west, and among those hopes is the inauguration by government of a scientific system of experiments that will prove the feasibility of irrigation. The center of political power is moving in the course of the sun. With power will come prestige and with prestige will come a public ear more sensitive to the voice of our demands. Capital, and great enterprise representing capital, are moving in our direction, and the day is not far distant when the combined and co-operating power of capital and the people will make itself felt in Washington. We have no reason to lose heart for the present. Let us continue to be persistent in the advancement of this project of irrigation. We may not be getting any closer to Washington, but the factors at Washington are coming closer to us. The influence of the west is increasing, both in the senate and house of congress. The speakerships are coming west and giving important places on important committees to western statesmen. Not only are hearts beating sympathetic with ours under the great dome of the capitol, but there is a mighty throbbing heart in the White House that is pulsating in harmony with every legitimate project which makes for the progress, the prosperity and the happiness of the west. I do not claim to be a prophet, gentlemen, but I predict right now that if we all place our shoulders at the wheel in good earnest, the name above all names, save that of the father of his country, which the future children of so-called semi-arid Kansas will reverence and bless will be the name of Theodore Roosevelt.

"Gentlemen, I have, I am afraid, taken up too much of your time, for the value given in return, and permit me to say in conclusion that if I have a public career before me I hope it will not end until I witness the Isthmian canal completed and the products of the irrigated west passing through it to feed nations which have felt the pangs of hunger for centuries and which can never be fed properly until they are fed by the corn and meat products of western Kansas. Those products will be among the best missionary forces to the empire of the orient and the islands of the sea, for when our brethren of the trans-Pacific lands of them they will see that they are good and will learn to know and to love the God who endowed the white man with the genius to cultivate and produce them."

# An Important Matter

The importance of urging the supporters of Victor Murdock to participate actively in the coming election, May 26th, cannot be too often repeated. It is not only important to him personally, but it is equally important—perhaps more so—to the Republican party. Over confidence too often not only works an injustice to candidates, but is disastrous to party organization. No time is more fitting than a by-election to prepare for the great contest involved in a general election. Now is the time to prepare in this district for the presidential election of 1904. It will not only be of advantage to the presidential ticket to have a big solid vote cast on May 26th, but it will be of great advantage to every candidate, both congressional, district and county, running next year. Victor Murdock is popular; he is gaining friends from all parties, and if the Republicans do their duty on election day the party can and will show an increase of strength that will have its influence on the public mind of the district.

Special elections are always dangerous for the dominant party unless the members of that party are vigilant and active. Don't depend upon your neighbors to do the voting this year. Get out yourself, take your neighbors out with you, and you will find that your duty to your candidate and to your party will be done wisely.

Victor Murdock is a young man. It will be his first term in congress. He is conspicuous in being the only congressman to be elected during vacation, and the result will be watched closely by men who are observing the drift of popular opinion—especially in Kansas. If he goes to congress with a big majority such as you and men like you can give him if you sacrifice an hour or two to party duty, and to help a worthy young man on election day, it will give him prestige and influence—more so than if he were elected at a general election—and you, as the man he represents, will profit by it.

Mr. Murdock will appreciate a good majority. Too many people will stay at home to give him what he deserves. You—the reader of this—will, it is hoped, realize that if seven Republicans in each precinct stay at home, the Republican majority of the district will be wiped out. Bear this in mind on election day, May 26th.

# VICTOR IS NO FASHION PLATE

Victor Murdock does not believe that the clothes make the man. He is not a "dude," although he is, by nature, quite a handsome man. "When he is dressed up," which is seldom. This is caused by the reason that he has always heretofore been a busy man, night and day, and never has allowed himself time to "dress up."

He, like a great many others, likes to work in old clothes and the habit has grown so strong upon him that he is negligent about his dress on state occasions even now. The following from the Wellington, Kansas News, wittily illustrates his indifference to public opinion with regard to his personal appearance:

"Last winter a big politician attempted to put a collar on Fred Dumont Smith and got into trouble for his pains. The friends of our new congressman will be sorry to learn that he wears a collar, put around his neck by a Democrat, too. You see it was this way: The citizens of Wichita were to be out in force for a grand ratification of the nomination in honor of their new congressman. It was seven o'clock and the grand entrance was to take place at the Auditorium at 7:30. David Leahy

noticed that the collar and cuffs which Victor had put on at the beginning of the campaign were quite badly soiled. To be presented in such a manner would never do, and the Irishman was gone like a flash. In a very few minutes he was back at the Eagle office out of breath entirely, but with a new collar in one hand and a new pair of cuffs in the other. 'Where's Victor?' was Dave's excited inquiry, and, if you know him you can hear him say 'He-but no Victor was to be found. Up the stairs he went and down he came. Then up, down and across the street, but no sorrow-topped statesman could be sighted. The anguish of that Irish patriot was pitiful, when a friend called his attention to the object of his search shaking hands with some admirers a short distance away. The act in pursuit of an active mouse is a picture of positive repose when compared to the conduct of that son of Erin as he seized his pride and joy and bore him to the second floor, far from the maddening crowd, where he tore the offending collar from his neck, jerked the cuffs from his wrists and invested him with the proper regalia for his station. Then David's king was ready for his crown."

# PRESS OPINIONS ON THE NOMINEE

**State Papers Uniformly Regard the Nomination of Victor Murdock as a Wise Piece of Policy**

Hutchinson News: The Republican candidate for congress in the Seventh district is all right. While the News and Reno county had other intentions, not a word did we or could we say against Victor Murdock. There is no brighter or more likeable fellow personally. He is young, he is energetic, he is able, he is clean, he is honest, and he will make a good congressman. Born in Kansas and his work and heart in Kansas, he will make a most representative representative. The more the people know him the better they will like him. Taken from a field of good candidates and made the nominee for congress without a hard feeling on the part of any of his rivals, he enters the campaign free from political complications. He is a thoroughbred believer in Kansas and Roosevelt, in righteousness and Republicanism. What better testimony can the News give in his favor than to record here the admission that for a month we have looked for reasons why Victor Murdock should not be nominated and have never found or named one which was discreditable to his character, his honor or his ability.

Wellington News: The nomination of Victor Murdock for congress is most satisfactory. To those unacquainted with him the enthusiasm of the News may be regarded as flattery or unwarranted encomium. But those who know him best will agree that we state his qualifications at less than their true value. And as the people of this county become acquainted with him it will be found that his selection was most wise.

In the brightness of his mind, Victor Murdock at 32 is at least the peer of any man of equal years who has ever been in Kansas politics. In ability to work hard and accomplish things he has no superior. He is so good natured and sincere as to be without a single enemy in his home city, of nearly 30,000 people. He is so erect in his manhood and of such strict integrity as to be regarded by some of his friends as being over-sensitive respecting personal honor in politics. He despises shame and hypocrisy, yet conceals his contempt with such fine diplomacy as to avoid irritation of the boldest and most blatant demagogue.

Victor is a great absorbent, and at the end of his first term in congress will be as well posted as the average congressman is at the end of half a dozen years in the harness.

The Republicans of the Seventh district may well feel proud of their nominee, and it may safely be predicted that with the coming years they will be prouder and yet prouder still.

Lawrence Journal: To Victor Murdock, rugged, virile, brainy, intelligent and active, the noble son of a noble sire, the congratulations of the state of Kansas go out on his nomination as the candidate of the Republican party in the Seventh district for congress. The brilliant young man will be a credit to the entire state, and his nomination is a vindication of the best in politics, and is a selection in which the entire state can heartily rejoice.

His father is a pioneer of Kansas, an active participant in the early struggles for freedom, and a later factor in the development of the state, the man who has done more to make Wichita the leading city of the southwest part of the state than anyone else. It is easy to see how Victor Murdock came by his sterling qualities.

Kansas born and bred, educated and married in this state, Victor Murdock early became an attaché of his father's newspaper, the Wichita Eagle, and did good work there, but not content with that he sought a larger field, and worked on Chicago papers for a time, winning honors and doing credit to his early training. After returning to Kansas he assumed charge of his father's paper and has made it one of the newest and most readable in the state. He is 32 years old and his youth and enthusiasm have been tempered by an experience that makes them a valuable aid in all his undertakings.

The nomination of this young man is a credit to the state and the convention, and his selection on the first ballot at a gathering where it was thought there would be a long drawn out battle indicates an appreciation of his merits that is not usual with a political convention in the selection of a candidate.

# ADVOCATED THE "DRAWING" PLAN

Mr. Murdock has tenacity. He will stick to a thing, if he believes it to be a good thing, until he accomplishes it. It was he who promoted the idea of having the public lands in the Kiowa and Comanche country in Oklahoma distributed to the people under the "drawing" plan. At first he was laughed at for proposing it but he knew, from experience derived from the working of the old system, that some new method was required to prevent the lands from being gobbled up by adventurers who could ride in on fast horses, or by gangs of "sooners" who would perjure themselves, for one another, to prove prior rights, and he kept advocating the "drawing" plan until the government adopted it. The result was, and he foresees it, that western people generally who deserved it—got the land. The drawing plan appeared to his remarkable foresight, as one that would obviate contests and bloodshed—which he saw so much of after prior openings, and

the result was that not a shot was fired over land in the so-called "new country." The "drawing" was a great success from every standpoint, and the system has been permanently adopted by the government. There was an element of statesmanship in his tenacious advocacy of the "drawing plan," for his motive in doing so was to save human life, to avoid conflict that would give a bad name to the section concerned and to secure the land as nearly as possible to western people—men as well as men—who, by bearing the brunt of that pioneer life which made the lands valuable—were entitled to it. This accomplishment by Mr. Murdock proves several things; that he can get even the government to listen to him; that his sympathies are thoroughly with the west; that he believes in having a people who, in their hardships, establish a civilization, enjoy the fruits of it; that he is for his own people and his own kind of people; that he is against contentions which lead to bloodshed.

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"Well, I just wanted to look you over, for you are a great curiosity. We never heard of your like in Chicago before. You didn't come last Monday and get your money, and now here is the second week up and you haven't asked for it. Every other reporter in this town spends his money before he gets it. Here, take your money, and hereafter call for it every week."

"Yes, sir," replied Victor meekly. "That day Murdock wrote his wife, 'I have \$44. Better pack up and come to Chicago.'"

"One of his early assignments in Chicago was to write a world's fair story. The exposition was opened with a ball, and the fashion of the city was there. Murdock's assignment was to be 'the man on the outside.' He astonished himself in the crowd and saw the fashionable persons enter the ball room and heard the envious and ill-natured comments of the spectators while the rich equipages arrived and discharged their loads of well-dressed men and women. The policemen used their clubs freely and kept a passage way open. The spectators began to jeer at the policemen and the police talked back. Murdock, who was an impressionable youth, felt sympathy for the crowd, and when he returned to the office he was full of it.

"It was the only time I ever lost my head and let my sympathies get the better of my judgment," the candidate said last night. "I wrote yards, and when the city editor saw I was about done he snipped my story into his own hands, instead of letting it go to the copy reader. I felt complimented."

"Pretty soon he called me into his room. He shut the door carefully and said: 'Victor, if I print this story and I will both lose our jobs. This is an Anarchist.' With that he ripped the story in two and dismissed me."

"Victor Murdock was with the Inter Ocean about two years. He first was given the baseball assignment, and finally was put on local politics. The climax of his work was to travel with William McKinley in his race for governor of Ohio in 1894. This campaign was preliminary to Major McKinley's canvass for the nomination for president in 1896, and the result therefore was of especial significance. Major McKinley and the Kansas reporter became fast friends, although the young man was given to speaking his mind. One day early in the campaign the young man observed in a general conversation with the other correspondents that there is demagoguery in every public man and it always crops out in his speeches. They said that Major McKinley was an

exception. Murdock doubted it, and they challenged him to find demagoguery in the speech that night.

"Well," they said after the speech, 'did you find the demagoguery?'

"Yes," he replied.

"Where?'

"In the last part of his reference to pensions."

"Major McKinley appeared soon to say his customary good night."

"Major," they said, 'Murdock says you had a touch of demagoguery in your speech last night.'

"I didn't say it for him to hear," Murdock protested.

"Where was it, Victor?" McKinley asked, smiling at the young man's bluntness.

"Well, it was in the last part of the reference to pensions, if I must tell you."

The next night McKinley cut out that part of his speech. One afternoon the major dropped into Murdock's room and stretched himself on the bed. They were alone, and the young man thought it would be a good opportunity to put a few questions to him.

"Major, what do you think of free silver?" he asked.

"McKinley moved not a muscle, but looked hard at the ceiling. When Murdock had recovered from the scare of the silence he put another question: 'What do you think of the A. P. A.'? Another stare at the ceiling and another period of silence."

"That ended Murdock's monologue."

Mr. McKinley had a way of expressing a wish with his eyes. One day he was seated with Murdock at the table in the hotel, when a politician came in with a factional grievance. He was drunk. Mr. McKinley cast an appealing look at his young friend. Instantly Murdock engaged the intruder in conversation.

"You people are not hospitable," he said to the man. "We have been here since last night and no attentions whatever have been shown us."

"This aroused the man's town pride."

"That is somebody's neglect," he declared. "Go and get your reporters together, while I send for carriages. We will take a drive. Major excuse me. I don't want these reporters to leave town feeling bad about us."

"That night Mr. McKinley gave Murdock a pressure of the hand when he said good night."

The candidate was named after his mother, or at least her name, Victoria, suggested it to the father, who proposed it. He was born in Burlington and was brought to Wichita when he was eight months of age.